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Maurice Hewlett

A SKETCH OF HIS CAREER AND SOME REVIEWS OF HIS BOOKS

WITH PORTRAIT

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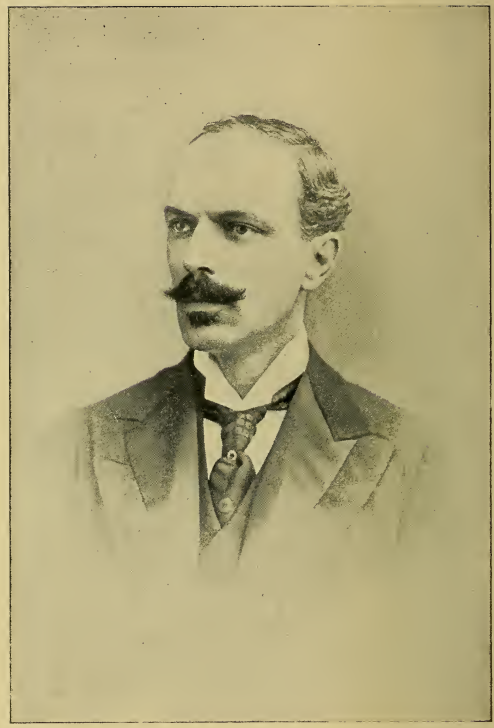

MAURICE HEWLETT

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AUTHOR OF
"THE FOREST LOVERS," "LITTLE NOVELS OF ITALY,"
"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF RICHARD YEA
AND NAY," ETC.

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THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH GIVEN IN THIS PAMPHLET IS DERIVED IN A GREAT PART FROM THE ADMIRABLE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE THAT HAS APPEARED FROM TIME TO TIME IN THE COLUMNS OF THE *New York Tribune*, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT MUST ALSO BE MADE FOR SEVERAL ITEMS OF INTEREST WHICH HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED BY *The Bookman*.

Maurice Hewlett

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Maurice Hewlett was born in 1861, and after leaving Oxford at nineteen years of age returned to London, his birthplace, and applied himself to "blackletter" law, a study hereditary in his family since his great grandfather left his home in the county of Somerset and settled in London. In 1888 he married and in 1890 was called to the Bar. Failing health drove him to an extended tour in Italy and aroused in him a strong desire to enter the field of literature. On his return to London he began to lecture at South Kensington and University College on Mediæval Times. He also wrote for several literary journals, and in 1895 he published his first book, "Earthwork Out of Tuscany," which was a record of his impressions of his Italian journey. He had not yet found his proper ground of pure romance, although he was making for it unconsciously.

Soon followed "The Masque of Dead Florentines." In 1896 he was made head of the Land Record office, a post which had been filled acceptably by his father before him. His training has thus been remarkably varied as barrister, lecturer, essayist, poet and student of Mediæval and Italian life and thought. He himself speaks indifferently of school and college life, but attributes much of his literary bent and skill to the influence of his father, Mr. Henry Gay Hewlett, of Shaw Hill, who was an antiquarian with a passion for whatever was quaint and picturesque in mediæval customs, furnishings and chronicles, and whose temperament and tastes were shared by his son.

During the last three or four years Mr. Hewlett has been a familiar figure in Whitehall and is to be seen almost daily lunching at the National Club, in Whitehall Gardens, with a congenial group of officials and literary men.

Mr. Hewlett is a listener, rather than a talker, but his face will be the first to light up with an appreciative smile over a happy turn or some subtle pleasantry. He talks well when he has

warmed up to the point of quick improvisation on some theme which fires his imagination. He is a man without affectation of manner, or devices of pedantry, and likes to do simple things in a simple way. He is too modest and too sensitive ever to talk about himself or his own work; but those who know him well honor him as a high-minded artist without conceit and without reproach. He has no ambition for writing many books or for making merchandise of his art. He has set for himself a high standard of artistic workmanship, and he is not willing to lower it for the sake of popularizing his books. He does his work as Keeper of the Records of the Crown lands, and he woos the muses as the recreation of his leisure hours. He regards literature, not as a money-making trade, in which success is measured by editions, but rather as an art, like music or painting, to be practised by those who love and honor it. Like Thackeray, he has established a confidential relation with his readers by virtue of the beauty and charm of his style, and he sets high value upon his reputation as an artist.

Mr. Hewlett seems to have spent his time at Oxford reading and "scribbling" to use his own phrase, and left college without obtaining a scholarship. Of this academic period he says "I wasted my time. I dreamed. I tried to do things too big for me, and threw them up at the first failure. I diligently pursued every false god. I don't think I was very happy, and I am sure I was very disagreeable. I doubt now if I was ever a boy except for a short period, when by rights I should have been a man."

Though in an office which requires precision and humdrum regularity Mr. Hewlett has not carried into his literary work any such methodical ways. He has an eccentric plan of his own which suits his temperament. He writes in the morning and evening with great rapidity, warming up to his work as soon as the pen is in his hand and dashing off page after page of manuscript without staying for revision or deliberate study. When the manuscript is finished he looks it over and either tears it up or casts it aside. Making a fresh start he writes his story a second time without reference to the first effort, dashing

it off page by page and writing always with his imagination at white heat. When the second manuscript is completed he surveys his work critically and either flings the copy into the waste-basket or lays it aside where he cannot refer to it. He makes a third and possibly a fourth attempt on the same lines, and finally succeeds in finishing his story to his own satisfaction. Not the least advantage gained by this method of work is spontaneity of style. *The Forest Lovers* has the effect of improvisation from beginning to end. The hand is practiced and it is art that conceals art. Every page has the freshness and sparkle of an impromptu performance inspired by sudden idea or instantaneous impression; and this subtle effect is sustained in chapter after chapter without impairment of fascination and charm. Mr. Hewlett's gift comes from a vivid imagination which is not hampered and kept under restraint by his extraordinary method of composition. With every new manuscript he gains a fresh access of power, imagination and sensibility; and as his final copy is dashed off with increased heat and

accelerated movement the sense of spontaneity is intensified.

His volume of poems, "Songs and Meditations," was published the year he received his Civil Service appointment, and the manuscript of "Pan and the Young Shepherd" was placed with a publisher. The publication of this last book was delayed and in the meantime, in 1898, The MACMILLAN COMPANY brought out *The Forest Lovers*. This extraordinarily beautiful story was followed in the next year by *Little Novels of Italy* which confirmed the opinions of those discerning critics who had hailed Maurice Hewlett's earlier work as an event in literature. Now at the close of the century he has given us *The Life and Death of Richard Yea and Nay*, a historical romance, planned somewhat after the manner of a "chanson de geste" and about which is growing a veritable literature of critical essays and reviews.

Among the more famous Americans who have been captivated by the style and power of this writer and whose views have been published, are Mr. James Lane Allen and Mr. Hamilton W.

Mabie, while among many of his countrymen stands prëeminent the name of Frederic Harrison whose masterly article in the Fortnightly Review for January, 1901, has been quoted in so many places.

Such criticisms as these are of interest inasmuch as they enable Mr. Hewlett's readers to measure their own estimate of his writings by that of men who are themselves masters in the craft. As it would make too bulky a brochure were these articles to be printed in their entirety it has been thought well to reproduce the following excerpts of the most characteristic opinions.

James Lane Allen; on *The Forest Lovers.*

This work, for any one of several solid reasons, must be regarded as of very unusual interest.

In the matter of style alone it is an achievement, an extraordinary achievement. Such a piece of English prose, saturated and racy with idiom; compact and warm throughout as living human tissues; vigorous and pliant as a spring bough; as clear to the thought and as winsome to the ear, in all its depths and shallows, as a long woodland brook; and so flowing ever naturally on

and on, whithersoever led or wheresoever needed—such a piece of English prose, in these passing days of trailed traditions, well deserves to be set apart for grateful study and express appreciation. It might even be hailed as one more current sign of calmer, nobler times ahead for our hurried and harried art of literature, when the artificer of words and ideas, the artificer of life itself, the novelist, will go about his labors as the artificer of old went to his priceless metal work and his textile: not in breathless haste to be done with it, but breathless with suspense and delight over his own handiwork, over his own creations.

For assuredly, after all, the palpable and crowning excellence of this writer's style, as of the story itself, is his frank devotion to what he is going to do and his perfect faith in his own manner of doing it. This love of the worker for his work, his absolute confidence in himself and in you and in his story, the authority with which he says: "Here is a book that must be written and I am the only person to write it," take possession of you on the first page and never release you until the last. So that no matter whither he must go or what labors he must perform, it is all nothing but happiness to him—and it is all nothing but pleasure to you. Long may such ardor, such love, such faith last him; for no great book was ever born of less than these, and if so few great books are written nowadays, it is because of these deepest things the writers of them have so little.

As to the mere story that he had to tell, in naked truth it is centuries old. Element by element, adventure after adventure, turn by turn, it has all been recounted in how many volumes, in how many lands! What are all these doings and undoings of his young knight, *Prosper Le Gai* and the others but as one more cluster of

grapes, belatedly gathered from the ancient Vine of Romance—that mighty vine which grew to such astonishing maturity in European soil ages ago but has never yet ceased bearing either there or—through its many shoots—in other literatures? What is it, then, that makes the story new, modern, significant in tendency? What is it that gives to this cluster from the immemorial vine a flavor so fresh, a bloom so truly of our own, and not of any earlier, vintage? One thing—and that of radical importance. This tale of chivalry is wholly unlike the typical mediæval tale of chivalry by reason of its view of human life in relation to Nature. In the older literature of this kind, Nature had no vital place in the story and man no vital place in Nature. Here is the first piece of work of the sort, known to the writer, in which these two necessities are fundamentally and artistically considered. The philosophy of the narrative is never apart from the philosophy of the earth. The characters are earth-born. The courses of their lives no more flow onward undirected by this fact than a river can rise out of its bed. And not only does there reign throughout the book this wholly modern scientific valuation of human life in its relation to Nature, but all this part of the work is done with passionate fondness and a truly marvelous beauty. Such descriptions of landscape, often achieved by a single stroke or a few details; such freshness, such vividness, such surety of insight, such loving knowledge—to what recent novel can one turn and say that therein the like has been done before? If I may speak in my own person, as expressing merely my own conviction, I can truly say that in the matter of interpreting Nature there are passages in this book that I have never seen surpassed in prose fiction. And when Nature can thus invade and overrun

the erewhile barren, sterile, neglected wastes of the mediæval romance, what hand will long be able to keep the living edges of her growth from hiding or softening the newest brick and mortar of the realistic novel?

ROYAL CORTISSOZ on *Little Novels of Italy* in *The New York Tribune.*

It is characteristic of the really gifted imaginative writer that while he is scarcely thought of as "a man of culture"—those words carrying, as a rule, a more limited significance than they ought—he has everything which goes to make such a man. Reading is his, taste, criticism—especially criticism—and all these things combined simultaneously and involuntarily to purify and enrich his utterance, so that while he is spontaneous and original to the last degree, he nevertheless conveys all the varied charm of a mind experienced and trained at many points. Such a writer is Maurice Hewlett. He proved this in his first book, "Earthwork Out of Tuscany"; in his collection of verse, "Songs and Meditations," and in his long novel, "The Forest Lovers"; but he gives the measure of his equipment even more conclusively in the book of five comparatively brief narratives with which we are at present more particularly concerned.

The range of his art would alone proclaim his remarkable quality as an author. In "Madonna of the Peach Tree," the force of old religious ideas, half spiritual and half superstitious, is set in vivid relief against a study of the variegated life of Verona. The epicurean æstheticism and melting sentimentality of the Renaissance play through "Ippolita in the Hills," with side

winds blowing from the rusticity of the land outside the walls of Padua. A kindred theme is handled in an entirely different manner in "Messer Cino and the Live Coal," and the tragic note which is struck picturesquely in "The Judgment of Borso," is raised to a higher power in "The Duchess of Nona," perhaps the most brilliant achievement in the book. But what impresses the reader in Mr. Hewlett's scope is not merely its inclusion of many types and passions, of diverse scenes and colors, but that it involves uniformly a sure and easy seizure of the fundamental things lying unchanged forever beneath the surface. It is with no tricks of description, with no mere fripperies of costume or tags of speech, that he erects an individuality, a presence, in his pages. Vanna, in the "Madonna of the Peach Tree"; Borso and his young minstrel in the sketch of Ferara; Molly Lovel the transplanted English girl, and Cæsar Borgia, in "The Dutchess of Nona"—none of these is remembered as a figure in a book, for this or that salient trait, but as a figure in life, with a multiplicity of traits, little things, all merging in one unforgettable personality, one ineffaceable image.

These are all studies in historical painting, these daringly invented tales of innocence and crime, passion and intrigue, comedy and tragedy. Yet, though he draws the Borgia, for example, in his habit as he lived, Mr. Hewlett's art, whether it is wreaked on portraiture or on the exploitation of a beautiful landscape, a courtly pageant, a thrilling episode of drama, is not merely an affair of broad strokes with the brush; it proceeds in a familiar, suggestive, almost casual fashion; not leaving too much to be taken for granted, but causing details to drop into their places without any ostentation of learning. It is as if the author identified himself wholly

with the stuff in which he worked and forced it to speak for itself, insistently or modestly, as the exigencies of actual existence would have permitted. There is one instance in which this clairvoyance almost overleaps itself and leaves an impression no less convincing than that encountered in every other one of the stories, but hardly as artistic or as pleasing. We refer to "Ippolita in the Hills," the tale of a woman of the people, whose great beauty so excited the macaronic poets of her native town that she was against her will enthroned Queen of Love in the preposterous Collegio d'Amore, and ultimately chose an amazing way out of her captivity. Every word in this is true, but for once Mr. Hewlett has been carried away by his absorption in the spirit of his personage, and instead of mastering it with his usual skill he has allowed it to master him. Like one of those early Italian masters of the "novella," whose racy volubility went hand in hand with a passionate enthusiasm for the curious emotion, the rare epithet, the subtle and distinguished phrase, he has tinged too perceptibly with the artificiality of his theme a piece of writing that is otherwise extraordinarily fresh and veracious. Naive, candid, ebullient, moving with the joyous "furia" of the Renaissance to its idyllic climax, this all but captures the imagination and would be quite triumphant if it were not for the excessive manipulation of the author's style in the introductory description of Padua, and for the touches here and there more explicit than discreet. But in justice to Mr. Hewlett we must confess that "Ippolita in the Hills" embalms just such authentic motives as, in the annals of the Renaissance, insist upon expressing themselves in their own way. They take the pen from the interpreter's hand, or, rather, guide it for him; and thus we

find the redundancies in this particular story absolutely just, though not, perhaps, absolutely in harmony with Mr. Hewlett's accustomed vein.

For it is one great merit of his style, a style entirely his own and entirely charming, that it follows with serpentine closeness the bidding of his mind. Condensed when the urgency of the moment demands it, subtly rising to occasions that require grave felicities of language, this style is magical in itself and it always cuts to the bone. It has, too, that nervous energy, sometimes tense and thrilling, sometimes merely blithe and animated, which is the mark of the writer pouring out his ideas without effort and meaning every word, so that the printed page has a lasting vitality. "Little Novels of Italy" is to be commended for its substance, for the new and romantic visions which it gives of an historic time, but for nothing is it more admirable than for its demonstration of Mr. Hewlett's complete command of his instrument. His is a creative genius, expressing itself with precision in its own terms. To one other rare gift we must refer, and that is the purity of imagination reflected in his work. Seeking his characters in the paganized and bloodstained walks of the Renaissance, boldly approaching figures sinister and sometimes inconceivably base, he nevertheless causes his lovely heroines to pass unscathed in their maidenly innocence through crises often terrible. Here we feel the poet beneath the romancer. In his prose, as in his verse, Mr. Hewlett aims at an ideal of singular nobility and renders the charm of it more appealing because he takes the dignity and beauty of rectitude as a matter of course.

FREDERIC HARRISON, on *Richard Yea-and-Nay*, In *The Fortnightly Review*, January, 1901.

At last we have a fine writer of romance—of historical romance in the old meaning of that somewhat languishing art. For some time I have watched the maturing of Maurice Hewlett's genius with enjoyment and hope. In *Pan and the Young Shepherd* I found quaint and lusty fancies not a few; some of which, as a plain man, I could not fathom; some of which left me uncertain if they were poetry or violent conceit, but withal conceit racy with native originality and power.

In the *Forest Lovers* he went further; and won a success that even the jaded novel reader had to acknowledge. The *Forest Lovers* was indeed no "novel." It stood by itself. It opened a new era of prose tale. It was a fairy tale; but one told with such romantic gusto, with so much of antique flavor, and in such ruddy and fragrant English, in spite of a too visible aiming at the "precious," that it placed its writer in the very front rank of imaginative fiction. The five short tales in the *Little Novels of Italy* were a greater success in an even more difficult art. They were real historical romances of mediæval Italy; full of invention, local color, heavy with the intoxicating aroma of the Renascence—that wonderful orgy of beauty, genius, and passion. But they were detached panels, as it were; hard, glowing, objective, as some wall decorations of Pinturicchio.

It remained to be shown if our artist could construct an elaborate, full, coherent romance: true to historic realism; ample in incident and plot; correct in pictorial tone; a truly romantic epic, wrought out from end to end by living men and women, playing their parts in due relation and sequence. This Maurice Hewlett has

done in his new piece—*The Life and Death of Richard Yea-and-Nay*.

I make bold to say all this of his new book, albeit I have much to quarrel with in his way of working.

* * *

Yet withal *exceptis excipiendis*—I admit myself won over. Such historic imagination, such glowing color, such crashing speed, set forth in such pregnant form, carry me away spell-bound. If the wedding guests fresh from Mr. Mudie's banquet will not stand still to listen to this rhyme of the ancient swordsman, for my part I "cannot choose but hear." When all is said *pro* and *con*, *Richard Yea-and-Nay* is a fine and original romance.

It is a true historical romance picturing a wonderful epoch—that of the third Crusade—not in its armor, robes, properties, and scenic *tableaux*, but with sufficient archæologic realism, and above all with insight into the heart of its men, if not altogether of its women. It gives us not only mediæval pageantry—though as a pageant it is effective,—not only the outward manners of the age,—life-like as these are, but the true nature of such men as Richard and John, their fierce parents, Burgundy and Austria, and many feudal barons; and it pictures them more accurately to the record, I hold, than is usual with romancers, and perhaps with historians. There is much to be said against portraying historical characters in fiction, at least when well-known personages are the central figures. It is hardly ever successful, and the greatest masters of historical fiction keep the great men for incidental and rare appearance —*nec deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus*, &c., &c.; but in principle there is no absolute canon of art against

treating a real person as the central hero of an historical romance.

Mr. Hewlett has shown us that this can be done. His Cœur-de-lion is in the main the true Richard of documents, the Crusader-King of history: seen, it is true, in the glow of romance; deepened, colored, poetized, but in essence the Achilles of the twelfth century Palestiniad.

"*Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer*
Iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis."

And yet this "splendid savage" has qualities of heroism, magnanimity, and capacity for love and for remorse which make him interesting—at moments even lovable—not so much as he seems to Abbot Milo, his almoner, or to Mr. Hewlett, his biographer, but yet of all characters in history the one best fitted to fill the title-rôle of a romance of war, adventure, chivalry and love.

Mr. Hewlett has not shrunk from the perilous task of taking a famous character of history for his principal figure, making him indeed the sole hero of his plot and producing him on every scene. Nor has he shrunk from the yet more Quixotic venture of choosing as his hero the man whom the Wizard of the North twice brought into the field. But if he has not bent the now rather rusty bow of Ulysses, he has hit the mark with a bow of his own. Neither the garrulous and indulgent Abbot, who was chronicler to Richard, nor Mr. Hewlett, who has recast the chronicle, seem quite conscious how tremendous a brute was the real man whose deeds and loves they record. To them he seems a kind of demigod not to be judged by our law, whilst they honestly relate his deeds and offences. The cold voice of history, in

the well-weighed words of Bishop Stubbs (*Chronicles and Memorials of Richard I.*, p. xvii) says of the King:—"A bad son, a bad husband, a selfish ruler, and a vicious man, he yet possessed some qualities which the men of the time accepted as better than the wicked wisdom of his father, and which made his tyranny less intolerable than his brother's weakness."

Both Abbot and Mr. Hewlett frankly relate deeds of their hero which entirely justify this verdict of history; and in that sense their Richard is the true Richard of Anjou, Normandy, and England. But they also relate deeds and words of his, and circumstances of his far-wandering life, not to be found in any extant chronicle, which rather accord with the glamour that for seven centuries has surrounded his name, and constitute him (with all his lawlessness and savageries) a type of chivalry and feudal war. His magnanimity, his piety, his passion, his remorse, as retold to us to-day, are historically consistent with the dark side of the man. And, indeed, Mr. Hewlett, in painting the "Yeas" of his Richard's "Nays," has given us truths of character which pedestrian history has too often failed to record. How else came the memory of Cœur-de-lion to enthral the West and East all these ages, if he were simply compact of vice and cruelty? Mr. Hewlett has given us the answer. And his portrait is powerful, fascinating, and not false to documents. From the first hour to his last breath, Richard of the Lion Heart, as here presented, is the same magnificent and lawless Paladin. It is a great feat to paint such a nature to the life.

* * *

The keynote of the book is that Richard of Anjou is shown to us throughout by the awe-struck and complaente vision of the Abbot, his friend, confessor, and

apologist. To him, as he states in the Exordium, Richard showed "two natures, cast in two moulds, sport of two fates; the hymned and the reviled, the loved and loathed, spendthrift and a miser, king and a beggar, the bond and the free, god and man." This is the fierce Angevin paladin who brought the leopards into the shield of England, the offspring of a Lioness and the Pard, or rather "Leolupe, got by a lion out of a bitch-wolf." And over his master's grave the Abbot moralizes again—"He might have been greater, had not his head gone counter to his heart, had not his generosity been tripped up by his pride. So generous as he was, all the world might have loved him, as one loved him." "All his faults and most of his grief sprang from this rending apart of his nature." "King Richard knew himself in those last keen hours, and (as we believe) won forgiveness of God." So judges the Abbot. And it is not for any of us, nor does Mr. Hewlett attempt, to anticipate the sentence of the Last Day. Such a character is not absolutely contradicted by extant documents. It is unquestionably a grandly romantic type; and Mr. Hewlett has painted it to the life. This in itself is a great feat; and, for my part, I should have enjoyed it, even if it had been recorded in monkish Latin.

Happily, it is not told in monkish Latin, but in nervous and picturesque English. And here I had better face the charge which some critics are too eager to fasten on Mr. Hewlett's style. Mr. Hewlett's style is at any rate his own; it is part of his very skin and bone, as completely a part of his nature as were the styles of Carlyle or Macauley. There is no trace of trick or imitation about it. It is a style of singular terseness, of bold imagery, of keen stroke,

* * *

Mr. Hewlett has invented a form of singular terseness, raciness, and color crowded with images, sarcasms and cryptograms. If his *Richard* were to be written in the flowing vein of the *Talisman* it would fill six volumes; if told in the mode of *Clarissa Harlowe*, it would need sixteen. Mr. Hewlett's modest 400 pages contain the matter of a dozen romances of the day. They will be read and re-read by men who care for the higher literature. But as yet they may be found, it is to be feared, too "deep," too baffling for the easy-going millions.

I make bold to say that Maurice Hewlett's prose—*at its best*—is hardly matched by any of recent time.

* * *

Whilst Richard and his Jehane fill the whole stage, there is a crowd of minor characters of various types and interest: the terrible Henry of Anjou, his evil wife, their miscreant son, John, Philip Augustus, who is not well treated, the sleek Abbot, the false Montferrat, the swordsmen, Saint-Pol, Gurdun, Gaston of Béarn, the petulant Berengaria, and that truly sublime assassin, the Old Man of the Mountain. All fill their parts, and duly play up to the hero of the piece. And so, the scene moves round West and East—Normandy, Touraine, Languedoc, Spain, Picardy, Paris, London, Poitiers, Sicily, Cyprus, Holy Land, Austria, and last scene of all at Chaluz, in Limousin. It is a real *Itinerarium et Gesta Regis Ricardi.*

One cannot shirk the question (about which too much is being said)—how does this Richard look beside him of the *Talisman?* No doubt, the task on which Mr. Hewlett has ventured is far the more perilous; for,

whereas Scott makes his Richard in the *Talisman* quite subordinate, and in *Ivanhoe* produces him merely in a sudden glimpse, according to the master's rule as to historical personages, and perhaps according to the true rule, Mr. Hewlett takes a prominent historical personage as his central hero, and undertakes to paint the inmost nature of a man of whom we have abundant records by contemporaries. In spite of this difficulty it is plain that Mr. Hewlett's portrait is far closer to that left us by John of Peterborough, Ralph de Diceto, Roger of Hoveden, William of Newburgh, Richard of Devizes, and the so-called Vinsauf and the rest. Mr. Hewlett gives us some flavor of the real Richard, some authentic glimpse of the true twelfth century, with all its poetry, passion, madness and blood. Scott's immortal pictures of chivalry are poems, Faery Queen idealizations of a world seen in an imaginative dreamland, from which the gross and savage realities are purged. Mr. Hewlett bravely sets himself to rehearse sublimities and savageries in black and white, as set down by men of the time who thought heaven and hell to be equally real, and all men and women equally destined for one or the other, according to their diligence in masses and prayer.

The action is so swift and hot, the dialogue at times so abrupt and close, like some good translation of a Greek play, that much of Mr. Hewlett's *Richard* reads more like drama than romance. They say it is to be dramatized; but it would cut into six plays, and still leave episodes that would be matter for a dozen "short stories." There is a profusion of dramatic *tableaux*—the death of the old king, the rape in the Church of Gisors, the prophecy of the leper, the bleeding corpse, and the bowing rood at Fontevrault, the Tower of Flies

at Acre, the palace of Musse. And the descriptions of scenery are full of truth, color and feeling, as the castled crags round Poitiers, Cahors, Acre, and the tower of Flies, a veritable lair of Beelzebub, the God of Flies, Ascalon, and Lebanon.

And with all his love for the grim, the naked, the sardonic, Mr. Hewlett drops out some fine idealisms—"the sacred air in which a loved woman moves"—"his songs were all of love, and if her name came not in her image did; she knew by the pitch of his voice when he was occupied with her"—"flowers made the earth a singing place"—"the country took tints of Jehane * * *; the woods, being hot gold, her russet hair; in still green water he reads the secrets of her eyes; in the milk of October dawns her calm brows had been dipped"—"when he had forgiven an injury it did not exist for him any more." They tell me they find all this harsh, difficult to follow, queer. But for my part I prefer a real historical romance such as this, told, it may be, in somewhat antique old English, to photographs of thieves' slums, and the monkey tricks of schoolboys and recruities—aye, or to a wilderness of monkeys, and to all the drawing room flirtations and divorce court vulgarities which are the fashion of to-day.

Hamilton W. Mabie on *Richard Yea-and-Nay*, In *The Outlook*.

The author of "The Forest Lovers" is in many ways a significant and solitary figure among contemporary English writers. He has no affiliations of an artistic kind with any of his contemporaries; he stands, so far

as representative capacity is concerned, apart from his age. There is little in any of his books which will help a future student to understand the England of the close of the nineteenth century. This is not saying that Mr. Hewlett as an artist is out of touch with his kind or unrelated to his age; it is saying that he is a writer, like Spenser, Blake, Keats, and Poe, of individual rather than representative genius, and that he is to be understood by relating him to the long movement of literature in England rather than to the literary movements of his own age.

He is a born lover of beauty for its own sake, as were Spenser, Keats, and Poe. He is primarily and fundamentally an artist, whose genius has no further end and needs no higher inspiration than self-expression through the forms of art. With the popular interests of his age, its agitations, its passion for reform, its eager and restless searchings for truth, for better conditions, for new foundations, Mr. Hewlett's work shows no concern; not, necessarily, because he is indifferent to these things or deaf to their appeal, but because his work is of another kind. The function of the artist in the range of a full life, among English-speaking races at least, is rarely understood; he is regarded as a person whom it is pleasure to have about and whose skill is of use in decorative lines. The beauty of the world as a revelation of the nature of the Infinite, and the significance of the response of man's soul to that beauty, are often misunderstood even when they are recognized.

Mr. Hewlett is one of that small group, never large at any time or among any race, in whom the passion for beauty is masterful and creative. His instinct for harmonious expression, for the shaping of the outward

form to express and match the inward character, has been clarified and reinforced by study of the times and works of men who were most sensitive to beauty and most fruitful in producing it. He knows the secrets and the magic of the Middle Ages, and he knows also the potencies, both for splendor and corruption, of the Renaissance. "The Forest Lovers," so far as remoteness from our time, detachment from its interests, and pure romantic quality, are concerned, might have been written by Edmund Spenser. "Little Novels of Italy" belongs to a later age, and is saturated with a kindred passion for beauty. The spirit of the Renaissance lives in it more concretely and objectively than in the work of Walter Pater. The stainless purity, the radiant self-sacrifice, the merciless cruelty, the fathomless corruption, the detachment of the intellect from the moral sense, and the broad, rich, irresponsible humor of the Renaissance, are marvelously brought out in those striking stories. They have the richness of old missals, the beauty of the lives of the saints, and the easy license of Boccaccio.

In "Earthwork Out of Tuscany" the secret of the Renaissance, or rather of the Italian genius and temperament in the period of the Renaissance, is disclosed to those who can meet Mr. Hewlett half-way; for he is one of those writers who select their readers because they demand co-operation. He cannot be understood unless one reads him with the imagination. His subtle and fascinating study of the Italian landscape and of the atmosphere and architecture of the Italian cities as the record of the Italian temperament and point of view goes far towards making the spirit of the Renaissance comprehensible.

In his latest story, "Richard Yea-and-Nay," Mr.

Hewlett goes back a little further in time, and gives himself the full and free use of the most romantic material. His story is not, however, a mere excursion into fairyland. Romance in his hands does not mean irresponsible creation of scenes and figures for the sake of giving imagination full play; it means deep fidelity to the spirit of the age which is described, and subtle diffusion of its atmosphere. In Richard Mr. Hewlett has drawn a portrait of extraordinary human and artistic interest—a study of a complex character, executed with masterly skill, and based on profound study and insight. The beauty of the narrative, in many passages, is hardly to be matched in recent English literature.

* * *

The qualities in Mr. Hewlett's work which promise to give it enduring interest are its depth of imagination, insight, and construction, its extraordinary beauty, and its genuine human interest. It has the solidity of structure of great fiction; it has the richness of old tapestries which have kept their colors, and its full-veined humanity gives it movement, passion, atmosphere. Such work may not appeal to the widest constituency or disclose its significance and beauty at the first reading, but it contains the promise of fame.

The Nation on *Richard Yea-and-Nay*

Not once but many times the troubadour, Bertran de Born, who knew him well, calls Cœur-de-Lion *Oc et No*, "Yea-and-Nay." Here was a title for Mr. Hewlett's book and his clue to the labyrinth of cross-purposes, of doing and undoing, that was Richard. In the wrong

Richard did to the woman that loved him lay the forecast of his more notorious tragedy. When he renounced Jehane of the Fair Girdle, he said nay to his heart; when he snatched her back from the altar, he said nay to his head. He was bold enough to marry her despite policy, craven enough to cast her off again for policy. When the zeal of the cross burned within him, he was logical enough to marry Berengère of Navarre, and with her dower buy him a way to the Holy Land; illogical enough, once married, to refuse to be husband to her. In the holy war he won the love of none, the obedience of few, the admiration of all. A nature that flings away what it desires, and grasps again for what it has cast aside—there is something monstrous in this Yea-and-Nay. And it is no small part of Mr. Hewlett's achievement that he has gained for such a hero, with the reader's moral condemnation, his sympathy. A "snatching lion, sudden, arrogant, shockingly swift; a gross deed done in a flash which was its wonderful beauty"—that is Richard in action, and, perhaps, here lies his fascination. In any case Mr. Hewlett has taken Cœur-de-Lion out of the passing show of romance, and fixed him as a man suffering and causing suffering. Hitherto he might be taken for granted, like Arthur or Robin Hood; henceforth he must be reckoned with like Tristan or Tito Melema.

If Richard trusted neither heart nor head, Jehane, Mr. Hewlett's happiest creation, might have been counted among those

"That weren trewe in lovyng al hir lyves."

From the sullen, beautiful girl of the dark tower who sent Richard back to his duty and his princess, to the mother of his son who sacrificed her body that her lord

might live, she is steadfast in loving through yea and through nay. One cannot doubt that she has joined that band of "love's martyrs" which follow Chaucer's Queen Alceste.

It will have already appeared that this book shows much of the "high seriousness" of the great "dramatic" novels to use Mr. Paul More's suggestive classification. This has not prevented certain qualities of the "epic" novel as well. Behind and about the main characters lies a whole troubled world. The Abbot Milo, through whom Mr. Hewlett chooses to see Richard, is a presentation such as fiction had not yet seen of the ecclesiastical culture of the twelfth century. In him is all its elaborately graceful pedantry, its shrewd worldly wisdom, its capabilities of enthusiasm, with practical disregard of the deeper moral issues. The mediæval combination of refinement in taste with sheer brutality in morals is seen in Richard's rivals and fellow-crusaders. The mere citation of memorable descriptive passages, like the death of Henry II. and the poetical debate or tenzon at Autaforte, would unduly prolong our notice, but this much should be said, that the sound of arms in this book has the epic ring, and is in nowise to be confounded with the mere clatter of present-day romance.

* * *

Of the striking prose of this novel, highly wrought and distinguished as it is, a word should be said. There are many euphuisms. To the more common euphuism of prettiness Mr. Hewlett has never condescended. But there is a euphuism of power to which the greater spirits are prone. To it Mr. Hewlett has often yielded. As in a great painting of Delacroix, the

whole landscape—shrubs, trees, rocks, mountain sides—writhes and swings with the wrestling figures of Jacob and the angel till the mind reels with the sense of action, so in Mr. Hewlett's narrative the minimal things have a kind of distracting life of their own.

* * *

It was Mr. Hewlett's prose style that convinced us some ten years ago that the publication of "Earthwork out of Tuscany" was an event in English literature. That judgment, so far as it went, we have had no occasion to retract. Whether in the more facile success of "Forest Lovers," in the trenchant brilliancy of "Little Novels of Italy," or in his minor pieces, Mr. Hewlett has never lacked the penetrating word and the enkindling phrase. It is his quality.

* * *

If certain defects of this notable book have been considered somewhat at length, it is in the confidence that Mr. Hewlett's "Richard Yea-and-Nay" is only the earnest of the great romance that no other writer of the day is so likely to give us.

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